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NEWS RELEASE



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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

USD ECONOMICS CHAIRMAN ADVOCATES ARBITRATION FOR "PUBLIC WORKER" STRIKES

SAN DIEGO, Calif.--Voluntary arbitration was advocated by the chairman of the University of San Diego economics department as a means of settling public labor disputes when bargaining breaks down.

The Rev. James F. Hanley, SJ, referring to the current strike of postal workers said, "By law or custom, there are some areas where strikes are not permitted and we need some way of dispute resolution when bargaining breaks down."

Father Hanley is on the California panel of arbitrators for settling of disputes involving public employees, organized through the American Arbitration Association.

The procedure is voluntary, he notes, as the country does not have a system of compulsory arbitration, "which is regarded as repugnant to our way of life. We like free collective bargaining."

However, he noted, in collective bargaining the ultimate weapon and the real power of the employee is the strike.

Author of a book about the Swedish labor system, a Wenner-Gren fellow, Father Hanley said that in Sweden a national wage agreement has been successful since 1964, and has also tamed inflation.

The Swedish system provides for employees and employers to be represented by continuous bargaining agents, Father Hanley said. What they have done, he said, is in effect to voluntarily settle the wage-price spiral by what we would call a wage-freeze.

(MORE)

The system is free in that the government exerts considerable pressure, rather than use edicts or law, he said.

"We have a lesson to learn from their sense of the spirit of the system, where parties are anxious to settle things so that the government does not come in," Father Hanley said. He pointed out that the Swedish government is also concerned that there be no strikes, inflation or disruption of the economy.

He acknowledged that Sweden is small, with a work force equal to that of Manhattan. "We need to devise our own means of settling disputes," he added. "I would like to see America have the spirit of trying to settle things voluntarily."

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